

## Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09NAIROBI1296, UHURU KENYATTA - PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS AND THE

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09NAIROBI1296**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">09NAIROBI1296</a>	<a href="#">2009-06-26 12:13</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Nairobi</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.the-star.co.ke/>

VZCZCXRO9757  
OO RUEHROV  
DE RUEHNR #1296/01 1771213  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 261213Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0005  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 6607  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3251  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3123  
RUZEFAA/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY  
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NAIROBI 001296

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/26/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: UHURU KENYATTA - PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS AND THE

REFORM PROCESS

REF: NAIROBI 767

-----  
Summary  
-----

11. (C) Uhuru Kenyatta appears to be working towards a presidential run in 2012. While many have pointed out that replacing President Kibaki, a Kikuyu, by another Kikuyu, would be unlikely due to anti-Kikuyu sentiments prevalent across much of Kenyan society, Kenyatta may be encouraged to attempt a presidential run due to shifting political dynamics that make potential challengers seem weak. Interestingly, Kenyatta seems to appreciate the need to be seen as pro-reform, and we should encourage him to push for action on key reform issues. Alternatively, the potential for Kenyatta to foment violence to achieve political ends cannot be ruled out (he is reportedly a key figure on the list of suspected perpetrators of post-election violence). End summary.

-----  
Kenyatta Preparing For 2012 Presidential Bid  
-----

12. (C) Although in public and private Uhuru Kenyatta has avoided openly declaring presidential ambitions for 2012, he appears to be moving to pave the way for a presidential run. While conventional wisdom says that another person from the Kikuyu ethnic group cannot succeed President Kibaki, a Kikuyu, political dynamics that make potential challengers seem weak may be encouraging Uhuru and his potential supporters to rethink this.

13. (C) Kenyatta is taking steps that are clearly intended to bolster his political standing and mobilize support. His appointment as Finance Minister was seen by many as an implicit endorsement by Kibaki; it provides a powerful platform for Kenyatta to pursue presidential ambitions. The budget which he recently submitted to Parliament (septel) has virtually bought many parliamentarians as a result of vast expansion of the funds designated for the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). The CDF is used to fund projects in parliamentary constituencies. While use of CDF funds has become more transparent and accountable over the past couple of years, parliamentarians still wield enormous influence over use of the funds, and employ them to enhance their political standing and support. No budget presentation has ever been greeted with such enthusiasm by parliamentarians. (It is important to note that expansion of the CDF, if used transparently ) and therein lies the rub ) can serve a legitimate purpose of helping stimulate the economy through infrastructure projects; the economy is suffering greatly due to the aftermath of the post-election violence and the world financial crisis. Through this tactic, Kenyatta also increases the support he is likely to receive in working behind the scenes to ensure that parliamentarians never approve an independent special tribunal to hold accountable those involved in post-election violence. It is generally assumed that Kenyatta,s name (and that of his prospective ally William Ruto) are on the list of suspects the Waki Commission gave to Kofi Annan. (The danger of being identified for investigation and possible prosecution is one of Kenyatta,s principal vulnerabilities.)

-----  
Kikuyu Politics Favor Kenyatta  
-----

14. (C) Kenyatta must move to ensure solid control of his KANU party as a potential presidential vehicle. KANU is currently the second biggest partner to Kibaki,s Party of National Unity (PNU), holding 14 seats in Parliament, mostly representing non-Kikuyu regions. Ex-President Moi,s son Gideon could compete for control, but at the end of the day an accommodation could be worked out. (Kenyatta was Moi,s designated successor and ran in 2002 on the KANU ticket.) Gideon Moi and other KANU stalwarts have been pressing Kenyatta to focus his energies on rebuilding KANU.

15. (C) Kikuyu political dynamics seem to be favoring Kenyatta. There has been an emerging realization among Kikuyu professionals, progressive politicians, and others that it would not be healthy for the nation or wise politically to

NAIROBI 00001296 002 OF 004

seek to have another Kikuyu replace Kibaki. That said, however, many Kikuyus, including the still dominant political class, fear the potential consequences of electing a non-Kikuyu (the concerns include worries about their economic and political interests, including the potential for another ethnic group to exploit anti-corruption efforts against them). Kenyatta is slowly but steadily emerging as the most likely potential presidential designee of the Kikuyus -- should they decide to back a candidate for president. Other contenders are not gaining traction. Minister of Security Saitoti is considered too old, not charismatic, and he is tainted by the Goldenberg corruption scandal. Kikuyu dissident Martha Karua, the former Minister of Justice and head of the NARC-K party within the PNU, has not gained wide support in the Kikuyu Central Province. (Vice President Musyoka, the nominal head of the Kamba community, which is closely related to the Kikuyu community, remains a potential standard-bearer if at the end of the day the Kikuyus decide that they should not field their own candidate. However, that would be seen as a Kikuyu-Kamba condominium, which might well be worse than a straight-out bid by Kenyatta if he can get crucial support from the Kalenjin community.)

16. (C) While Kibaki will not play a decisive role in designating his preferred successor, his standing as the principal Kikuyu elder and the power that State House wields, mean that obtaining his support is important. A number of sources report close contacts between Kibaki and Kenyatta, and between those two and William Ruto, a potential ally. Kibaki's naming of Kenyatta as Finance Minister was seen as at least giving Kenyatta the platform to make a play for leadership.

-----  
Potential Kenyatta-Ruto Alliance  
-----

17. (C) Ruto has made a number of private visits to State House in recent months, and he and Kenyatta are in close contact. They worked together behind the scenes to ensure defeat of the special tribunal bill. One rationale for cooperation is the importance they attach to promoting the welfare of their respective ethnic communities (Kenyatta's Kikuyu community in Central Province and Ruto's Kalenjin community in Rift Valley) in order to avoid a repeat of what happened last year during the post-election violence. Although tensions between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities remain high and make an alliance problematic, the political imperatives driving potential cooperation between Kenyatta and Ruto cannot be dismissed. (Some of the thinking runs along these lines: an alliance among the Kalenjins, Kikuyus, and the Kambas assures a winning majority. In the event of violence in response to such a victory, such violence could be contained to PM Odinga's Luo ethnic community in Nyanza Province and to his supporters in Nairobi's Kibera slum.)

18. (C) Tentative, behind the scenes cooperation between Kenyatta and Ruto is focused on a deal whereby Ruto uses his influence among Kalenjins to facilitate the reintegration of the Kikuyu internally displaced persons in Rift Valley; in return, Ruto would get a significant share of important economic positions for his Kalenjin political allies. What is particularly problematic in a potential Kenyatta-Ruto alliance is who would get top billing on the presidential ticket, but there is some sense that Ruto might accept the position of vice president or prime minister, and thus prepare the ground for a presidential run in 2017. (Ruto is in his 40s.)

¶9. (C) Most observers, rightly in our view, believe that attempting to have another Kikuyu succeed Kibaki is a recipe for serious instability ) perhaps for a meltdown much more severe than that experienced last year. While some sort of arrangement could emerge between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities, this seems a distant prospect given what happened last year. (Importantly Moi, rather than Ruto, is still seen as the head of the Kalenjin community and there is bad blood between those two. If Moi supports Kenyatta, Ruto could decide to stay with Odinga, which would mean a split of the Kalenjin vote.)

-----  
Politicians Compete For Youth Vote  
-----

NAIROBI 00001296 003 OF 004

¶10. (C) Yet another indication that Kenyatta may be preparing the ground for a presidential run is his tacit support for the creation of a national youth movement. Struck by U.S. outreach efforts to grassroots youth movements in support of the reform agenda, parliamentarians and other politicians are scrambling to try to co-opt the youth. One of the most important of these efforts is the plan underway by Kibaki,s son Jimmy and several parliamentarians to launch a national youth movement on July 4. Although Jimmy has publicly claimed this is intended to push for change across the political spectrum, this is a ridiculous assertion given Jimmy,s position as a charter member of the vested interests.

¶11. (C) There are some indications that this new youth movement is intended to co-opt and destroy the grassroots youth movements which have been emerging across ethnic lines to push peacefully and in a non-partisan manner for change (see reftel on our efforts to encourage this). Jimmy and those behind establishment of this new youth movement attempted to get the Ambassador to attend the launch, which he declined to do. One of those heavily involved in setting up this youth movement made clear that it is intended both to bolster Jimmy,s eventual political prospects (probably to run for his father,s parliamentary seat in 2012) and potentially to serve as a source of support for Kenyatta.

-----  
Kenyatta Election Could Push Reform Agenda  
-----

¶12. (C) Kenyatta,s potential ambitions could be helpful in pushing the reform process. During a recent conversation with the Ambassador, Kenyatta claimed that he is privately pushing Kibaki to carry out key reforms, particularly with respect to the police and judiciary. It seems possible that ) given the clear public frustration with the slow pace of reform and our stated concerns -- Kenyatta appreciates the need for him, KANU, and PNU to be seen as more pro-reform. He claimed to the Ambassador that he is urging removal of Police Commissioner Ali and Attorney General Wako.

¶13. (C) If he decides to pursue the presidency, Kenyatta has several major strengths, but these are balanced and potentially offset by important weaknesses. Kenyatta is bright and charming, even charismatic. He is enormously wealthy, and therefore has not had to engage in corruption. Although his wealth is the inheritance from his father,s corruption, the Kenyatta family still holds a special status. Kenyatta,s liabilities are at least as important as his strengths. He drinks too much and is not a hard worker (though he surprised everyone by the acuity of the budget, which reportedly resulted from some tough work over long hours). Perhaps most importantly, Kenyatta has been closely linked to the Mungiki (which emerged in the aftermath of the Mau Mau and began as a movement in defense of Kikuyu traditional values, but which has long since morphed into a well-organized mafia-style criminal organization). The reason that Kenyatta is assumed to be on the Waki Commission list of

suspected perpetrators of post-election violence is his fund-raising to support Mungiki violent actions against Kalenjins during the post-election violence. Some reports indicate that Kenyatta has tried to distance himself from the Mungiki. (The links between the Mungiki and various Kikuyu politicians are at best murky.) Ironically, Kenyatta,s links to the Mungiki make him one of those who feels strongly that extrajudicial killing must stop (since many of the extrajudicial killings have been carried out by the police, under Commissioner Ali,s direction, against the Mungiki).

¶14. (C) Kenyatta may see shifting political dynamics as opening the way for a presidential run. Odinga is increasingly perceived as feckless, unable or unwilling to govern effectively and move forward the reform agenda. There is growing disillusionment within his camp (as conveyed by key interlocutors of Odinga,s Orange Democratic Movement, ODM, party to the Ambassador). Odinga,s being seen as in a weakened position may be wishful thinking given his political resilience and the fact that he could yet emerge as a reformer, but he has clearly lost significant popular support. The ODM seems both directionless and less united than before.

¶15. (C) Comment: Although talk of calculations with respect to the 2012 presidential election seems very premature, the reality is that politicians are already maneuvering with that

NAIROBI 00001296 004 OF 004

in mind. Those considerations will influence their calculations with respect to the reform agenda. The popular dynamic in favor of reform will influence politicians, behavior in a positive direction to some degree, but this will be weighed against considerations of ethnic alliances, fund-raising, and personal politics. Continued intensive U.S. pressure for implementation of reforms will help drive considerations in the right direction towards reform steps.  
End comment.  
RANNEBERGER